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LETTER DATED 2 JULY 1994 FROM THE SECRETARY-GENERAL
ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

You will find attached hereto a letter from the French Government informing me of its intention to establish a humanitarian protection zone in south-west Rwanda in accordance with Security Council resolution 929 (1994) of 22 June 1994 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would bring this letter to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(Signed) Boutros BOUTROS-GHALI

Annex

Letter dated 1 July 1994 from the Permanent Representative of
France to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I received instructions this morning to inform you of the very grave concern on the part of the French authorities at the deterioration of the situation in Rwanda and the danger of a further humanitarian tragedy in that country.

In recent days, fighting has intensified outside the capital and is spreading to the south in the region of Butare, not far from the border with Burundi, and also to the west, apparently, in the direction of Kibuye. French units stationed in the region in implementation of Security Council resolution 929 (1994) of 22 June 1994 have already carried out reconnaissance operations in Butare. They have observed the influx of tens of thousands of inhabitants fleeing the fighting, adding to the several hundred thousand displaced persons in that part of the country. The continued fighting is creating a situation in south-west Rwanda that, in humanitarian terms, will quickly become completely uncontrollable. If steps are not taken to remedy the situation, that entire part of the country will be the scene of major outbreaks of violence, with the movement of hundreds of thousands of persons fleeing in complete desperation and with the danger of the physical elimination of the minorities in the area, which already arose during the months of April and May. There is reason to fear that all those persons will seek refuge in neighbouring countries, particularly Burundi, aggravating a situation whose precariousness you are already well aware of.

France considers it its responsibility to alert the international community through you in order to inform it about the situation, which requires an immediate cease-fire, as called for by the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity (OAU). A halt to the fighting is the only truly effective way to stabilize the humanitarian situation and open the way to a resumption of talks with the assistance of the countries of the region in order to bring about a political settlement on the basis of the Arusha Agreement, from which those responsible for the massacres and, in particular, acts of genocide must, of course, be excluded.

If a cease-fire cannot be brought about immediately, France will be faced with the following choice: to withdraw from Rwandan territory, while endeavouring to save human lives through ad hoc actions, which would be extremely difficult and limited; or to organize, on the basis of Security Council resolutions 925 (1994) of 8 June 1994 and 929 (1994), a safe humanitarian zone where the population would be protected from the fighting and its tragic consequences in Rwanda. The Franco-Senegalese forces would seek to ensure, within their mandate, that no activities threatening the security of the population in question were carried out within or from the zone. The zone would need to be centred on the region where the humanitarian problems are most acute and should be sufficiently large, in view of the number of persons involved, and contiguous, in order to stabilize the population in the area and facilitate the provision of humanitarian relief.

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On the basis of information in our possession, the zone should comprise the districts of Cyangugu and Gikangoro and the southern half of the district of Kibuye, including the Kibuye-Gitarama road as far as the N'Daba pass.

France believes that, on the basis of resolutions 925 (1994) and 929 (1994), it is authorized to organize such a safe humanitarian zone. Nevertheless, it is the wish of France that, through you, the United Nations should indicate its support for the establishment of such a zone.

I wish to draw your attention once again to the urgent nature of the situation and emphasize that if France is unable to organize a safe humanitarian zone with the support of the international community, it will have no other choice than to withdraw very rapidly from Rwandan territory.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter circulated to the members of the Security Council.

Jean-Bertrand MERIMEE
